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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL AND SCHOOLS REHABILITATION

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 Public Affairs



U.S. Air Force Col. Anthony Foti, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division Facilities Sector lead, and David Dawson, GRD program manager for capacity development and sustainment, speak to Arabic media at a round table on education and vocational training in Baghdad, Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2007. At far left is Erich Langer, GRD Public Affairs and moderator for the round table. (USACE photo by Grant Sattler)

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Addressing reconstruction and capacity development support for schools and vocational technical training centers throughout Iraq, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hosted a round

table discussion here Oct. 23 for members of the Arabic media.

Making presentations on the topic from USACE were Gulf Region Division's sector lead for Facilities & Transportation, U.S.

Air Force Col. Anthony Foti, and program manager for the GRD Capacity Development Office, David Dawson.

Foti reviewed the role of the GRD in supporting the VoTech program, the current problems and the value of Votech training to the reconstruction effort in Iraq. "This program is very important," he said. "In order to have a pool of skilled laborers, we shall first provide the centers and develop operators and repairmen for modern systems and equipment."

He added that efforts are coordinated with the Iraqi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and Iraqi provincial and local governments. U.S. Government entities involved include GRD, the Multinational Forces–Iraq, Multinational Corps–Iraq and U.S. Agency for International Development.

The GRD role is first to provide assessments of existing structures and then to provide program and project management to rehabilitate VoTech facilities and schools. Currently seven assessments have been completed and seven rehabilitation contracts have been awarded. Typical work includes security fencing, refurbishment of water systems, wastewater treatment, electrical repair/upgrade, and structural reinforcement work.

VoTech programs in Iraq include instruction in trade skills ranging from welding and electrical installation to cosmetology and Computer Repair. VoTech centers are situated around the country with eight in the Baghdad area, six each in the north

and south, and three in the west and central regions.

"Iraq has a wealth of youth looking for a way to make a living," Dawson said. "60 percent of the Iraqi population is 30 years of age or less. Without providing the opportunity for them to be skilled workers they will not be able to raise their standard of living."

In March of this year GRD completed an \$84.2 million schools rehabilitation program under the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund. The program renovated or constructed 809 schools in Iraq, to the benefit of 324,000 students.

Typical rehabilitation of schools included the repair of damaged structural members, new electrical service, remodeling of restrooms, addition of lighting and ceiling fans, replacing broken windows, painting, roof repairs, replacing entry gates, and repair or placing concrete school yards. Some renovations include addition of an activity room, new school storerooms and kitchens including refrigerator, stove, sink and plumbing.

In non-construction support to education, GRD has assisted in the procurement, delivery, and installation of equipment, services and training for the Ministry of Education in a \$7.6 million program completed in August 2007. Items included computers, biology and chemistry equipment for universities and \$1 million worth of school desks.